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BY THE WAY

MANY Britons are too selfish to care for older members of their families, says Justice Minister Phillip Lee. Instead we rely on the state to pay other people to care. We could learn from the Hindu and Muslim communities, who still look after their elders, he adds.

I'm sorry to say he is right. For most people family now means mum, dad and the kids. When grandparents become too feeble to see to themselves they are packed off to the cheapest care home or, to cancel out feelings of guilt, an expensive one if funds are there.

In many cases it's unavoidable because people don't have space and when dementia is too severe relatives just can't cope. But the huge growth of "care" homes since the Second World War is directly linked to a gradual hardening of middle-class hearts. Striving to keep up in a society that measures its worth in terms of material possessions doesn't leave room for those who are past their use-by date. That's why retirement often brings a sense of worthlessness instead of a well-earned rest as it once did.

While other cultures revere the old, rich societies regard them as a burden. Not a nice thought, is it?

☐ THE Prime Minister's closing speech at the Tory conference was not a disaster. Had she run off the stage in floods of tears that would have been a disaster but in fact she coped extremely well with a silly interruption and a bad cough, just as one would expect from someone with her experience.

Observers who claim it was a fiasco are either exaggerating or seeing what they want to see. But it doesn't really matter because there is no way that Theresa May can still be leading the Tories come the next general election.

It's best that she stays at the helm for a year or two, tries to see out the Brexit negotiations, though it's quite possible that will never happen, and waits for calmer times for a new leader to be selected.

Yes she beat Jeremy Corbyn but only just. Since he is not in power his abilities for running a country will never be tested and he is free to make all kinds of promises. Unlike the Prime Minister he has no need to act responsibly and his devoted supporters are far cleverer at propaganda than the Tories.

Eventually a strong new leader must be found pitching a convincing set of policies rather than the Corbyn-lite drivel that now passes for Conservatism.

☐ AMERICA'S tax war against the Bombardier aircraft company shows up President Donald Trump's promise of a good trade deal with Britain for what it is: nonsense. The US has slapped a 300 per cent import duty on Bombardier jets, endangering thousands of jobs in Canada and Northern Ireland.

It claims that Bombardier has benefited from unfair government subsidies, as if Boeing has never received under-the-table back-handers in costly defence contracts. "America first" is Trump's watchword and Britain's special relationship doesn't matter a hoot. We can't rely on America to bail us out of a bad Brexit deal. We're on our own so better get it right.

☐ THIS year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons for its "work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons".

I don't think anyone needs educating about the effects of nuclear weapons and there's another important point: they can't be uninvented. Unless a robot arrives from outer space and threatens to obliterate the planet if they are not abolished they will always be there.

I can't think of a more useless organisation to receive a Nobel prize.

☐ THE Bank of England says it has been working for three years to achieve a smooth transition to the new £1 coin yet supermarkets, railway stations and no doubt many other organisations have still not updated their machinery to accept them. Instead of dogmatically insisting that the old coins will no longer be legal tender after next Sunday the bank should accept reality and extend the deadline by a few months. It's only money.

☐ I CAN accept that many younger people don't know that Pearl Harbor is in Hawaii – geography is not everyone's strength – but I am having difficulty swallowing the claim in a survey by the History Channel that five per cent believe Britain was on the same side as Germany, Japan and Italy in the Second World War

It's entirely possible, however, since schools now teach history in modules so that pupils might know lots about, say, the Tudors but absolutely nothing about any other period.

☐ THE growing trend for men to go sockless is causing all kinds of yukky problems such as athlete's foot, according to the College of Podiatry. Feet can apparently sweat up to half a pint a day, too much to be absorbed without socks. I know that women rarely wear socks but as everyone knows they only gently perspire and anyway don't wear enclosing shoes day after day.

Men's socks should be compulsory. Except with sandals of course.

☐ FORCES sweetheart Dame Vera Lynn, 100 this year, has sold a record number of albums in 2017. Blue skies for those of us sick to the back teeth of endless rap "music".

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